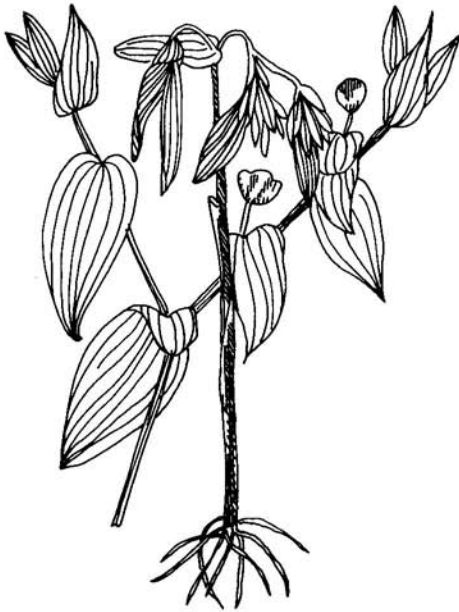


yellow-flowering edibles



BELLWORT (*Uvularia grandiflora*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Plant flowers, pushes up stem which appears to be "sewed" through leaf base. Leaf bright green above, downy below. Lily Family.

HABITAT: Low woods and along streams

LOCATED: Most counties except far southwest and tip of southeast

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COLLECTION: March - April, shoots; Fall - Spring, roots

USES: Vegetable (shoots and roots)

Bellwort is a beautiful plant whose leaves encircle the stem at the leaf base. The yellow flower forms a seed pod much resembling a bell-shaped wort.

I've fixed the young shoots as an asparagus-type vegetable in early spring. The shoots should be picked early as they get tough and stringy later. I find most vegetables are best when cooked in boiling salted water for several minutes and doused with butter. I realized how religiously I do this when one of my daughters said, "Mom, all vegetables taste a lot like butter, don't they?"

I have used these plants sparingly so as not to endanger their propagation.

The roots look like long bean sprouts joined at the top with a few new growth shoots which seem to be present for the following year's growth. The real job is to wash and clean the tightly packed roots in preparation for cooking. The roots have an edible center, with a string-like cord that makes a most unattractive appearing

dish. The nutty-flavored roots must be nibbled off this core, making one work for his supper. I place this in my emergency-food-only category.

Fernald and Kinsey state that a diet drink is extracted from the roots. My experiments proved the liquid from the roots to be very bitter, unhelped with sugar, honey or syrup. While it is not to my liking, I am confident that with this as my "diet drink" I would indeed lose weight!

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DAY LILY (*Hemerocallis lilio-asphodelus*)

FLOWERS: May - August

DESCRIPTION: Long, grass-like leaves from root-stalk. Flowers form on tip of naked stem. Lily Family.

HABITAT: Escaped to fields, roadsides, railroads, moist wooded banks

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Shoots, April - May; Buds, June - July; Tubers, all year

USES: Salad, vegetable, soup, pickle, fritter



The day lily is another of mother nature's grocery stores. It has a variety of uses and all are excellent food sources. I grow day lilies both for their aesthetic beauty as well as for my eating enjoyment.

The inner young sprout, as it is coming up, may be used in a tossed salad or cooked as asparagus. Pull up the new growth by separating the leaves and cutting down deep with a knife. These tender inner leaves may be cut up in a tossed salad to add a tasty, unidentified morsel. On the other hand, the lower 3 or 4 inches may be placed in boiling water for no longer than two minutes and served with butter for a delightful and mild vegetable.

My favorite meal is the unopened flower buds. These, picked while still in tight bud and boiled for a couple of minutes, give a delicious vegetable that resembles the mildness of green beans with the slightly fibrous texture of asparagus. Of course, I coat them with butter before serving.

The opened flower makes a tasty fritter. There are several fritter recipes which are good. One calls for 1 cup flour, 1 cup champagne or beer, $\frac{1}{4}$ t salt, 1 T corn oil. The mixture should be stirred together and allowed to set 30 minutes before using. Fry in hot grease, drain on a paper towel and dust with sugar. Another fritter suggestion: 1 cup whole wheat flour, 1 t salt, 2 T soybean or vegetable oil, 2 eggs, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk. Dip the blossoms into the batter, then into hot oil. Drain and sugar.

The drooping, wilted flower of yesterday is an addition to be used in soups, stews or Chinese foods. It becomes somewhat like a gelatin mass and aids thickening.

Because these products are so good, it is wise to try to freeze or dry some for winter. In drying the buds, place them on an old window screen and leave them in the attic until they become thoroughly dried. Later, seal the dried buds in a jar. I have a supply I've been using for three years now, so they do keep. When this vegetable is desired during off-seasons, let them soak for a few minutes in water before preparing as you would the fresh variety.

If you are wanting to try something different, place some of the unopened buds in your pickle crock along with poke stems which have been peeled, redbud pods, cattail shoots, day lily shoots, purslane stems and any other item worthy of pickling. To prepare this crock, layer each vegetable over a layer of dill, garlic, onions and red peppers. Place grape leaves (wild ones, of course, but either work) between each different vegetable layer. Cover the entire thing with a brine solution of 1 part salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ part vinegar and 10 parts water. Weight down the vegetables with a saucer to keep everything below the liquid. Leave for two weeks and put the finished product in a jar and seal.

Underground, the day lily produces small tubers which can be dug up at any time of the year when the ground is not frozen. These tubers are good raw in a salad, giving a hint of radish. Cook

the tubers for a few minutes and serve with butter for a very passable vegetable, although I prefer the raw uses. The cooked tubers may also be made into a potato salad as a potato substitute.

It is my understanding that day lily buds, crayfish, a few sassafras leaves and a bit of wild onion make a tantalizing wild gumbo. You can bet I'll try it.

I am much in awe of this remarkable garden escapee, the day lily! It is my family's favorite vegetable, wild or domesticated. With anything so good, I'm always amazed more use is not made from this storage pantry of Mother Nature's!





PURSLANE (*Portulaca oleracea*)

FLOWERS: June - November

DESCRIPTION: Low growing, succulent stems, green or purple. Leaves nearly opposite, green and reddish. Flowers form in forked stems. Purslane Family.

HABITAT: Cultivated and waste ground, rocky areas, open places

LOCATION: Scattered statewide

COLLECTION: June - November

USES: Salad, potherb, pickle, breadstuff

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Purslane enjoys gardens, flowerbeds, fields, waste areas. I have a large patch of purslane I'm encouraging in my backyard. This creeping plant is rarely taller than the lawnmower blade, although it may branch out 6 inches or a foot. It is a thick-stemmed, fleshy plant whose tiny yellow flower blooms on sunny mornings.

The plant is gritty and needs to be thoroughly washed before cooking or using. Unlike spinach, purslane doesn't cook away. I have used purslane in a variety of ways and like it in all of them. More important, and possibly a more accurate indicator, my family also enjoys this vegetable.

Place the end tips of purslane in a tossed salad for a new taste and texture. Or, for a real treat, wilt the purslane. Fry a couple pieces of bacon and crumble them over the purslane. In a

saucepan add equal amounts of the bacon grease, water and vinegar with 1 T sugar and 1 t salt. Bring this to a boil and pour over the purslane, causing it to wilt.

60 Purslane makes an excellent rice casserole. In a greased casserole, add ½ cup uncooked rice, 1 cup beef or chicken bouillon, 1 cup water, 1 T onion, ½ stick oleo, ½ cup grated cheddar cheese, 1 cup purslane, salt and pepper. Stir slightly and bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes. This is elegant enough for the most delightful of dinner parties. The *piece de resistance*, however, is what I call Party Purslane Casserole. Boil the purslane tips for 10 minutes, saute 1 large onion in 6 T bacon drippings. Drain purslane and add the onion, 1 t salt, ½ t pepper, ¾ cup cracker crumbs. Beat in 2 eggs, one at a time. Pour into your greased casserole and top with ¼ cup cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. I'm hungry just thinking about it!

For another yummy dish, try a cheese casserole. Hard-boil 4 eggs. Parboil the purslane for a few minutes, then layer purslane and sliced eggs as many times as possible, ending with the purslane. Pour the following mixture over the layered vegetable: ½ stick melted oleo blended with 4 T flour and 2 cups of hot milk. Add a teaspoon each of salt, pepper, mace. Dump in a cup of grated cheese. Cook this until the mixture begins to thicken. After pouring this cheese sauce into the layered casserole, bake at 250 degrees for 30 minutes. It is positively superb!

Purslane may also be fixed in an egg batter and fried. Roll the stems and leaves in flour, dip into an egg batter, then reroll in cracker crumbs and fry in a hot fat. This is delicious and could be used as a main course as you would morel mushrooms. My entire family accepts this wilding as a natural, domestic vegetable, thus giving it one of the highest ratings possible on my wild edibles scale.

The fleshy stems make a pickle which I've added to my dill crock with other wild pickleables. I suppose you could use any pickle recipes, but I tend to make a dill variety with the wildings. See page 7.

The small seeds form in a capsule that pops off its lid and scatters easily. These tiny seeds can be used by collecting the plants on a fine meshed screen, allowing the seeds to shake through into a collection box. The results are hardly worth the effort and energy applied, but it could be eaten if needed.

I feel very smug with my patch of purslane growing. I just hope it reproduces as easily as literature indicates; may it forever thrive in my backyard!!!!

AMERICAN LOTUS

(*Nelumbo lutea*)

FLOWERS: June - September

DESCRIPTION: Species vary, but roots enjoy water, leaf on top of water or submerged. See Steyermark for various species. Water Lily Family.

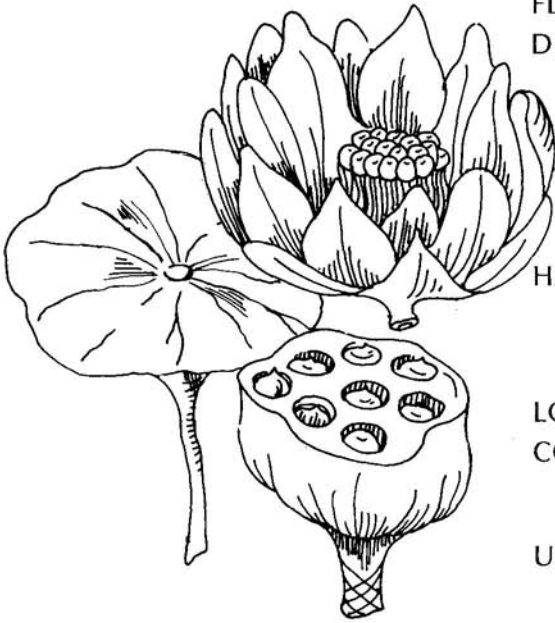
HABITAT: Oxbow lakes, ponds, river flood plains, artificial lakes and ponds

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Seeds, July - November; Roots, autumn - spring

USES: Rootstocks as vegetable; seeds for salad, breads, nibble

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The lotus is another of those plants that singly provides a sufficient food supply. While I have done some experimenting with this plant, I still leave a great deal untried.

If you get the stalk and leaf as it is still unfolding, it makes a good vegetable when boiled in two waters for a short period of time.

The seed pods are easy to gather as they are above water. The immature seeds may be added to a salad. They are somewhat marshy or musty, but nonetheless acceptable. They may be eaten raw or cooked. After the seedpod dries, the seeds may be removed from the shell by roasting in a 350-degree oven. The seeds may then be cooked and ground as a flour substitute. The seeds may be popped like popcorn. It doesn't pop, but swells and looks more like the unpopped kernels. These kernels may either be eaten or ground and used to make bread.

If you are really ambitious, and enjoy scuba or skin diving, get the rootstock tubers in the autumn or spring. They may be baked as you would a potato.

The lotus, or water-chinquapin as it is also called, has long been used by many Indian tribes as a fresh vegetable in season or dried to be used out of season.

SASSAFRAS (*Sassafras albidum*)

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FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Green twigs.

Leaves are alternate and of three shapes: mitten, one-thumb mitten, two-thumb mitten. Laurel Family.

HABITAT: Border of woods, prairies, roadsides, railroads, fencerows, fallow fields

LOCATION: Central and southern Missouri

COLLECTION: Roots, all year, best in February or March; Leaves, May - June

USES: Tea, jelly, soups, salad



CAUTION: The F.D.A. has banned the sale of sassafras tea. Safrole has produced liver cancer in rats.

The sassafras is an important tree in America and is used for a variety of medicinal, nutritional and commercial uses.

The most popular use is sassafras tea made from the roots. The roots, when cut, create an unmistakable odor of rootbeer. It may be washed, boiled in water and served hot or cold, sweetened

or unsweetened. I have yet to be disappointed in any of the forementioned ways. A really neat feature of these roots is their ability to be reused several times for tea. Merely save them and put in the water to reboil. Or, you can simply leave the roots in a saucepan on the stove if you indulge in the tea daily. One word of caution: I discovered that when left on the kitchen counter in a plastic bag, they mold. How about placing the roots in the refrigerator until the next use?

Another word of caution here: I have recently read that herbal teas containing safrole (from the sassafras root) have been banned by the F.D.A. Safrole has apparently caused liver cancer in laboratory rats. Perhaps sassafras root tea should be eliminated from your list of outdoor edibles.

A sassafras jelly can be made by brewing a *strong* tea. Each cup of tea gets a cup of sugar and the liquid is boiled. I generally use half a package of Sure-Jell when making wild jellies. This jelly is good as an accompaniment to wild meats and pork.

The young leaves, buds and twigs are used in soups and for making teas. Also, the young raw leaves add a spicy touch to a tossed salad. When dried, they are used in soups and creole dishes. Sassafras bark is used in making mulberry tea. The tender young leaves also make a tea which I don't feel can compare well enough with the root tea to bother with. It was used as a spring tonic to thin the blood.

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SPICE BUSH (*Lindera benzoin*)

FLOWERS: March - May

DESCRIPTION: Shrub tree.
Flowers before leafing.
Leaves, erect, pointed,
thinner at base.
Laurel Family.

HABITAT: Low or moist
woodland, thickets,
along streams, valleys,
ravine bottoms, base of
bluffs, wooded slopes

LOCATION: Southern and
east-central counties

COLLECTION: March - May

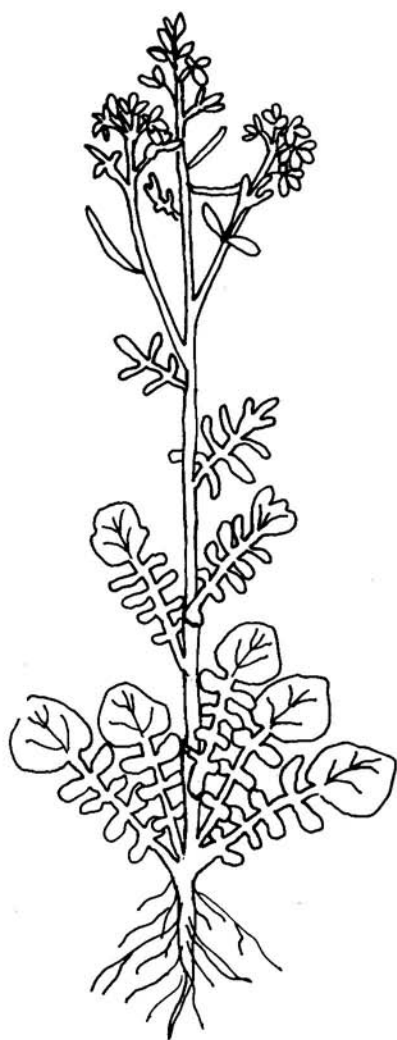
USES: Tea, spice



Early spring brings a beautiful but tiny yellow blossom which is closely attached to the twig of a spice bush. The noticeable lentiles on the trunk and branches, and the spicy aroma when the bark is scraped, aid in making positive identification of this small shrub tree.

The early flowers, tips of twigs, leaves or bark may be chopped up and used for making a tea. Add 1 teaspoon of the spice bush mixture to 1 cup boiling water and steep for 3 - 5 minutes. This dark grayish tea is spicy and appealing to drink. Later, the berries may be used for making tea or dried and powdered as a substitute for allspice.

If your woodland hike has given you cotton mouth, chewing on a twig of spice bush will relieve the situation and let your mouth become moist again. If you don't believe me, try it yourself!



WINTER CRESS (*Barbarea vulgaris*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Leaves dark green, start as rosette, rounded lobe at the end of the leaf stem, 2 - 8 pairs small lateral leaves down stem. Mustard Family.

HABITAT: Fallow ground, cultivated fields, wet meadows, pastures, railroads and roadsides

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Greens, January - March; Flowers, April - July

USES: Salad, potherb, vegetable

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Literature states that winter cress was the only green plant that could be picked to eat on Ste. Barbara's Day, December 4, thus giving its botanical identity.

This member of the mustard family is found all winter. The young plant's leaves may be picked in early spring or before for use in a tossed salad. Later the leaves become bitter and may need to be boiled in at least two waters when using as a spinach. The buds or flowers can be picked over several weeks until the flowers

are fully opened. These are gathered and prepared as broccoli, boiling for a short period of time in two boiling water baths. I hardly know whether to be glad or sad that most people do not use this food source. However, there is more than enough to share, the price is right, and for an afternoon of your time, you have an unusual vegetable for dinner. My favorite way to serve this vegetable is to cook and coat with butter. There I go with the butter-tasting vegetable routine again!!

I also found it good in a variety of other ways. Cook the flowers and serve with a cheese sauce, like broccoli. A great menu dish is to saute 2 T onion in 3 T butter. Blend 3 T flour in 1 cup milk and add nutmeg, salt and pepper to taste. Simmer with the flowers for about 5 minutes and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cream. Bring to a bubble and serve hot. This second recipe is great with the leaves instead of the flowers. The young leaves are excellent in a rice casserole as a spinach substitute. Try the same recipe as listed for chickweed on page 11.

I sometimes think my children try everything I fix just for the novelty of telling teachers and friends the next day, "You should have seen what I *had* to eat last night!" At any rate, it brings in a variety of different vegetables to the table.

The seed pods may be used in making a hot mustard sauce which can be served with Chinese food or wild game. Raw, the pods have a hot tang resembling the hot sauce of many Chinese dips.

I froze several packages of the greens to be used in any recipe as a frozen spinach substitute. The packages that I blanched were good, but those I fresh froze were bitter in cooking.

These leaves soften themselves in the pot with a mess of spring greens as they are an excellent potherb. The difference between salad and potherb is that salad may be eaten raw and potherb needs to be cooked.